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ABSTRACT

The major policy points made in the paper are that: (1) New York State needs a comprehensive system of occupational education which serves all persons needing job preparation and which uses all available public and private resources; (2) such a system will make available to every person a continuum of educational opportunities beginning in early childhood and extending beyond high school for as long as the individual needs or wants such opportunities; (3) occupational orientation in the elementary, middle, and early secondary years will provide all students with the basis for informed decisions regarding their imminent occupational and educational plans; (4) occupational education services for adults and out-of-school youth will be expanded and improved through more orderly arrangements which eliminate wasteful competition and duplication of efforts; and (5) all occupational education programs will be conducted within the framework of a State and regional planning process, coordinated by the State and involving all levels of government and all agencies or groups which operate or are affected by occupational programs. The short-range and long-range program implications of the policy are outlined, with reference to objectives in the New York State Plan. (SD)

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OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

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A Statement of Policy
and Proposed Action
by the
REGENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY
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FOREWORD

An educational system that is comprehensive and provides full opportunity must assist each individual to sustain himself through productive employment consistent with his abilities and interests. For nearly every person, work, or the inability or failure to work, is a prime determinant of standard of living, family relationships, friendships, life style, community service, citizenship, and leisure time. Each individual's occupation is a major factor in his sense of control over his own destiny. In our complex, technological, affluent society, this sense of control is remote if not unattainable without economic well-being, and without the knowledge that one is using his own powers to accomplish something of value to himself and others. For these reasons, the education we are developing in New York State must include a strong system of occupational education.

In this paper the Regents state their position on occupational education. The statement includes both short- and long-range guides for the development of occupational education. We urge support of the plan by legislators, the Governor, and all persons in the State concerned for our future environment.

Ewald B. Nyquist

EWALD B. NYQUIST

President of the University and Commissioner of Education

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Position of the Regents	8
Short-Range Program	13
Long-Range Program	15
Conclusion	17

INTRODUCTION

Occupational education has been a national, State, and local need and concern throughout this century. In recent years, however, various forces in our society have focused public attention on the need for vastly enlarged and improved systems of occupational education.

The expanding economy and increasingly complex technology on which so much of our social order depends have forged a common concern on the part of business, industry, labor, government, and the general public for the creation and maintenance of a competent work force. As society becomes more complex, so does the problem of creating and maintaining a work force adequate to meet its needs. Industrial change creates demands for new types of occupational skills, while diminishing or eliminating the demand for other types of skills. The uneducated and unskilled find themselves increasingly disadvantaged in the labor market, even as demand grows for higher levels of skill, resulting in the " manpower paradox " of workers without jobs at a time when jobs are unfilled because of shortages of qualified workers. Programs are needed to prepare workers for jobs which exist and are emerging, and to enable those already in the labor force to maintain job security even as occupational requirements change. The fundamental need is for an occupational education system as comprehensive and flexible as the society it serves is complex and changing.

Accelerating social change has created new awareness of the need to ensure equal opportunity for productive employment and career advancement for all Americans. In New York State the incidence of chronic poverty, unemployment, and welfare remains significant among all population groups, white and nonwhite, urban and rural, and is epidemic among minority groups, particularly blacks and Puerto Ricans in inner-city areas, where these problems are intensified by continued racial, ethnic, and social class segregation. Barriers continue to exist to equal opportunity for career advancement and development of maximum educational potential. Our objective is to place our educational institutions in the vanguard of developing and sustaining equal opportunity for all in a racially and socially integrated society. We believe that implementation of the recommendations developed in this paper will contribute substantially to ensuring equal educational opportunity. Equal opportunity in the labor market, while it is a concern of the Regents, is rooted in circumstances not always related to education, and will require action beyond the scope of this paper or the educational system.

An occupational education system capable of serving all students will need to be broadly conceived as part of a redesigned total educational system which has as one of its major purposes preparation for earning a living. Since students will not only be preparing for jobs which exist or are emerging, but for jobs of the future, whose nature cannot always be foreseen, occupational education will need to place increased emphasis on developing general learning ability as well as specific skills. More than ever before it will function as a means for learning to use the arts and sciences in real life situations, and as a source of and motivation for other forms of learning, rather than a substitute for them.

To serve all people, occupational education must be part of a macroeducational system which recognizes the career implications of all education and the educational nature of all experience, and which therefore minimizes "credentialism," or the idea that the only true path to success and happiness is an education leading to a traditional 4-year degree or beyond. The need is evident for an educational system containing multiple avenues to success and happiness. Students themselves view with increasing skepticism the idea that 4 years of a traditional college education is necessary for everyone. It was recently estimated that one out of every six students is on campus against his will — under pressure from his parents, his peers, or the prospect of being drafted. Recent estimates indicate that in the next 5 years New York State will have 350,000 more jobs requiring 2 to 4 years of technical education. Society at large is recognizing with new clarity that a tolerable future depends on skilled workers as well as professionals. Accordingly, Regents are concerned that young people who want and will benefit most from occupational preparation receive as much attention from the State as students in the academic curriculum.

Definition

For programing purposes, we define occupational education as that part of the educational process which prepares people for employment in occupations requiring less than the baccalaureate degree. However, occupational education in its broadest sense should be seen as an aspect of the total educational process. While it can be distinguished from other components of the educational process by its emphasis on developing job skills, occupational education functions as part of the total process in developing the many characteristics needed for personal, social, and occupational success. Besides developing specific job skills, occupational education provides orienta-

tion to work, and guidance in the selection of educational and occupational objectives. It is therefore a program for all students, not only for those who desire training in specific job skills.

Occupational education begins in the earliest grades and extends through all instructional levels, serving all people, regardless of age. In the elementary grades, occupational education develops understanding of the concept of work, positive attitudes toward work and the worker, and familiarity with the various kinds and fields of work. At the early secondary level, it provides exploratory and prevocational experiences leading to understanding of careers and the consequences of educational and occupational choices. In the later secondary grades, it provides skill training in clusters of occupations for job entry and/or continuation of occupational education at the post-secondary level. Post-secondary occupational education provides further opportunities to prepare for employment and directs a major portion of its attention to preparation for occupations requiring high degrees of skill and specialization. For adults and out-of-school youth, occupational education provides remedial and preparatory training for employability, job security, mobility, and advancement.

Occupational education therefore comprises all programs which provide training for employment, whatever the agency, public or private, which operates the program, and wherever the program may be housed: within the established public educational system, including public schools, area occupational education centers, manpower skill centers, public 2-year colleges, and urban centers; in private occupational schools; in specialized institutions such as hospital schools and rehabilitation centers; or within business and industry.

Current Status

Through State, local, and regional cooperation, and with Federal assistance, New York State has responded to the need for expansion and new directions in occupational education by developing a system of occupational programs serving persons of all ages in all communities of the State. Enactment of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the 1968 amendments to that act provided Federal funds to supplement State and local support of programs for secondary and post-secondary students, disadvantaged and handicapped persons of all ages, and adults and out-of-school youth. These funds represent approximately 10 percent of the combined Federal, State, and local expenditures for occupational education in New York State's public schools, area occupational centers, and public 2-year colleges.

The State's occupational education system includes a network of 67 area occupational education centers, administered by boards of cooperative educational services. The area occupational education centers provide access to comprehensive occupational education programs for students from school districts whose size and finances prevent them from offering a broad enough selection of occupational programs. The system contains a network of 44 public 2-year colleges, including six agricultural and technical colleges and 38 community colleges. Several of the public 2-year colleges also administer urban centers, which provide easier access to post-secondary occupational education for inner-city residents. Nearly every secondary school in the State offers some occupational education programs, and each of the major cities conducts a comprehensive program. Federal manpower legislation has assisted the State and localities in developing an extensive network of manpower skill centers providing training and retraining as well as remedial basic education for adults. Altogether, these occupational education programs within the established public educational system currently serve more than 667,000 youth and adults.

Residents of New York State also have access to a broad selection of occupational programs outside the public educational system, the most important of which are various State and federally assisted remedial manpower training programs; programs offered by private educational institutions, such as trade and business schools; and specialized programs offered by labor unions and by employers, including government agencies, businesses and industries, and hospitals.

These existing programs could constitute most of the necessary elements in an occupational education system comprehensive and flexible enough to serve the needs of all the people of New York State.

POSITION OF THE REGENTS

To guarantee an adequately prepared work force, and productive employment for all who are able and willing to work, New York State will need to fashion a *comprehensive system* of occupational education programs and services. Such a system will be *comprehensive* in that it will serve the occupational education needs of all persons in the State, including persons attending nonpublic schools, and in that it will utilize all available resources for occupational education, in a coordinated, nonduplicative, and cost-effective manner.

A Continuing Program

The system will provide a continuum of occupational education programs and services, beginning in early childhood and extending through all instructional levels, including adult and continuing education. Components of this continuum will be designed to ensure development of student characteristics at approximate key ages; for example:

- By age 9, the student understands the concept of work, appreciates the value of work and the worker, and is familiar with a wide variety of kinds and fields of work.
- By age 12, the student is familiar with the broad families of occupations, is aware of the prerequisites for employment in the various kinds and fields of work, and understands the ways of progressing from one occupational level to another. He is developing awareness of his own abilities, interests, and aptitudes in relation to various occupations.
- By age 15, the student is able to assess his own potential and to participate in making informed decisions regarding his immediate educational and occupational goals. His options include access to occupational programs which prepare him for immediate employment upon graduation, for continued occupational education at the post-secondary level, or for exit to the labor market prior to graduation.
- By age 18, every student is able to choose and plan the next step in his occupational and educational career. The occupational education student is able to obtain entry-level employment in occupations for which he is trained, and/or to enroll in post-secondary occupational education.
- By age 21, and for as long as he is able and willing to work, every individual is employed in a position commensurate with his skill development, and is able to select from continuously accessible preparatory and remedial programs which provide training and retraining for employability, advancement, job security, and mobility, appropriate to his talents, interests, and needs.

For these objectives to be realized, there will need to be greater career consciousness throughout the educational system. Career education is an idea whose time has come, not in the sense that preparation for work should become the sole or even major focus of the educational process, but in the sense that student exploration of career interests, aptitudes, and abilities is a powerful means of effecting a much-needed infusion of reality into the curriculum.

Early Exposure

If the objectives for ages 9 and 12 are to be realized, all students in the elementary and middle grades must receive continuous, exten-

sive, and direct exposure to the concept of work and to a wide variety of occupations. A number of brief and scattered experiences will not suffice as introduction to the modern occupational world. Rather, the introduction to work and jobs must be a significant and integral part of the total process through which students become familiar with their environment.

The Right To Choose

During the secondary years most students are faced with educational decisions of potential lifelong significance. In a humanistic educational system, students making such decisions have certain *rights*, which include:

- the right to choose on the basis of adequate self-knowledge and adequate information and exploration related to alternative educational programs and career opportunities;
- the right to choose between educational programs which are true alternatives, in the sense that all are of equal quality, and all open rather than limit future possibilities;
- the right to modify such decisions in the light of changes in occupational and educational directions, as the maturing individual developes new motivations, needs, interests, and abilities.

This statement of student rights is based on certain important assumptions concerning directions in which public education is moving or must move.

The most important of these assumptions is that every student, at every educational level, will be assisted in developing his full educational potential. Under any other conditions, the right to choose is an illusion, since failure to develop maximum potential places unnecessary restrictions on the student's options. In short, it is intolerable that any student should have to choose a given program or career because of the educational system's failure.

The right of informed choice implies that in addition to early exposure in the elementary and middle grades, all students will receive appropriate guidance and counseling in the early secondary years, and will have opportunities for prevocational exploratory experiences. Actual work experience and community service related to career interests ought to be part of the curriculum for all secondary students. No other single change in public education could do more to answer the demand for relevance, to break down the walls between the school and the community, and to bridge the gap between generations.

A major constraint on student choice is the belief that occupational education at the secondary level is a terminal program, restricting rather than broadening the student's future options. The time is past when any secondary educational program could be regarded

or designed as terminal. Already, increasing numbers of workers are facing the need to retrain several times in a lifetime, and this trend can be expected to accelerate along with industrial change. Many new and emerging technical and service occupations require preparation beyond the secondary level. Accordingly, underlying this paper is the assumption that in addition to preparing students for immediate employment, all secondary occupational education programs will provide the basis for continuation of education and training, either immediately after graduation, or as the desire or need arises.

Any student will be able to choose an occupational education program with assurance that he is increasing his future options, if:

- there is a strong bond between occupational and academic education, so that students completing occupational programs have sound backgrounds in both occupational and basic educational skills.
- the trend continues toward preparation of secondary students for work in families or broad clusters of occupations, rather than for specific jobs alone.
- the scope of occupational education at the secondary level continues to broaden, so that students with a wide range of interests and abilities are able to obtain preparation for occupations of their choice.
- more programs are specifically designed to prepare secondary occupational education students for continued study at the post-secondary level, and articulation between programs at the two levels increases.
- occupational programs are relevant, in the sense that they prepare students for occupations in which employment opportunities exist or are emerging, and reflect the actual requirements for entering and succeeding in those occupations.
- all students electing occupational programs have reasonable assurance of employment upon completion. This assumption implies that every occupational education agency, including secondary schools, will either act as an employment service in placing its own graduates, or facilitate placement through effective relationships with existing employment services.
- all barriers are eliminated which prevent any persons, such as members of racial minority groups, from enjoying equal opportunity for employment and career advancement.

Since maturing students must have the right to modify educational and occupational decisions, both the occupational education system and the larger educational system of which it is a part must be sufficiently open and flexible to allow changes in direction with a minimum of frustration and penalty. The system must facilitate movement across occupational curriculums, and movement in both directions between occupational and nonoccupational curriculums.

The right to modify decisions must include the opportunity for honorable exit from and reentry to the formal educational system without penalty. The system needs to give as much attention to the "dropout," or "pushout," as to the student who completes his education in the traditionally prescribed fashion. While improved educational programs promise to decrease the alarmingly high attrition rates in our secondary and post-secondary schools, alternative educational experiences and services are needed by the student who cannot benefit from continued formal schooling at a particular time in his life. It is the system's responsibility to assist such a student in obtaining employment and/or further training outside the regular school curriculum, and to encourage and facilitate his reentry whenever he is prepared to return.

Further Education

For occupational education to be a continuum, completely free of built-in limitations on student aspirations, every qualified student must be guaranteed the opportunity to enroll in a post-secondary educational program consistent with his talents and interests. Such a guarantee will require that every community college recognize and fulfill its responsibility of preparing students for occupations requiring post-secondary occupational education, and preparing students, including occupational students, for continued study at 4-year institutions. It will also require that full use be made of the private institutions offering post-secondary occupational preparation. The open admissions policy of The City University of New York and the full opportunity program of the State University of New York should help to guarantee access to post-secondary occupational education.

Lifelong Opportunity

Lifelong access to occupational education requires that programs for adults and out-of-school youth be planned as part of a system which continuously anticipates, perceives, and responds to employment problems, rather than improvised as reactions to crises. Nothing short of a coordinated system will suffice, since no one agency has or could conceivably develop the capacity to provide for the varied needs of all adults. Every educational resource which currently exists must be utilized, including the extensive programs conducted by various industries, and new resources must be developed, to ensure that every adult has full opportunity for employment and career advancement. The assumption of adequate services for adults underlies the entire concept of occupational education as a continuum or lifelong

process, since unforeseeable changes in occupational requirements could otherwise nullify the value of previous education and training.

The Planning Process

While national, local, and regional governmental units will continue to have concern and responsibility for the planning, financing, and operation of occupational programs, the State Education Department will have primary responsibility for leadership in a comprehensive occupational education system. State leadership is essential, not only because education is a State function, but because a unifying force is necessary to ensure that resources for occupational education are utilized efficiently and effectively to provide for the needs of all people.

Local and area programs will be planned and operated within the framework of a regional planning process, with participation by all agencies operating or closely concerned with occupational programs and services. The central, stabilizing elements in the regional planning process will be secondary occupational education agencies and public 2-year colleges. These will also serve as the links between the regional planning process and planning at the State level.

Widespread public understanding and support of occupational education will require that the planning process at all levels actively involve all community groups which are affected by occupational education, including business and industry, labor, government, teachers, parents, and students. Full use must be made of the advisory councils which exist at all levels, and other channels of communication with the community must be open as well.

An occupational education system which is continuously responsive to the needs of people and the labor market must be firmly based on a systematic planning, budgeting, and evaluation process. State, regional, and local administrators will have access to standardized management information systems which provide all data needed to target, manage, and evaluate occupational education efforts; e.g., data concerning target groups, enrollments, program effectiveness, costs, and manpower needs. Such management information systems will ensure accountability and constant feedback for program redesign.

SHORT-RANGE PROGRAM

The existing network of occupational education programs described earlier in this paper contains most of the pieces of a comprehensive

system of occupational education for New York State. Implementation of the Regents position, therefore, depends less upon initiation of costly new programs than upon continuation and acceleration of existing trends in program redesign, more efficient and effective use of available resources, and greater understanding and support of occupational education among students, parents, educators, and the general public. The Regents do, however, recommend immediate action to close gaps at the elementary, secondary, and adult levels which inhibit development of and access to an occupational education continuum.

Adequate provisions do not exist widely enough to ensure that by age 15 each student has received sufficient occupational orientation in the elementary, middle, and early secondary grades to enable him to make informed decisions regarding his plans for the immediate future. Students need adequate information on which to base such decisions, and the Regents direct appropriate units of the State Education Department to take immediate action to guarantee that right. Immediate action will include identification of current provisions for occupational orientation at these levels, and exploration and implementation of more effective approaches. Since occupational orientation at these levels is a responsibility of every classroom teacher and every guidance counselor, preservice and inservice education programs will be needed to increase teachers' and counselors' occupational awareness and their ability to help others develop such awareness.

Full access to the comprehensive system of occupational education will require that the legislature enact the Regents proposal concerning dual enrollment, which authorizes school districts to provide instruction in occupational education and other subjects for pupils enrolled in nonpublic schools.

In the absence of coordinated planning and operation of occupational programs for adults and out-of-school youth, the numerous and varied programs continue to duplicate efforts in wasteful competition for scarce resources. Despite the proliferation of such programs, in most regions of the State there is no central arrangement to ensure that every adult and out-of-school youth in need of training or retraining receives either direct assistance or referral to the kind of program which best suits his needs. The Regents recommend that a central arrangement for services to adults and out-of-school youth be developed in every region of the State, as part of the region's educational system, to enable community representatives to coordinate the wide range of local, State, and Federal Government programs and private programs in the best interests of the people served by these programs. It is essential that in each region the planning

for a central focus involve all groups or agencies concerned with occupational education, so that all available resources are brought to bear on the needs of adults and out-of-school youth. In the major cities of the State such arrangements can utilize the Community Education Centers proposed in the Regents Position Paper on Urban Education. In areas outside the major cities, the central focus should be developed as part of the regional planning activity.

LONG-RANGE PROGRAM

Leadership in the full implementation of a comprehensive system of occupational education will be provided by the long-range and continuing objectives of the New York State Plan for Occupational Education. These objectives are based on analysis of the occupational education needs of various population groups, projected over a 5-year period and continuously updated. The State Plan includes the following long-range and continuing objectives which have particular bearing on the Regents position stated in this paper:

- Continue to expand and diversify programs at the secondary, post-secondary, and adult levels which prepare occupational education students for existing and emerging employment opportunities.
- Expand occupational education programs and services for disadvantaged and handicapped persons at all educational levels.
- Increase the capacity of area occupational education centers to serve all students who desire occupational programs not provided by their local districts. The State will continue to improve the quality and reduce the operating costs of occupational programs through construction of permanent area center facilities where they do not currently exist.
- Provide secondary occupational education students with the basis for continuing their occupational education at post-secondary institutions. Emphasis will increase on pretechnical programs which include special preparation for continued study, and on articulation of secondary and post-secondary programs to ease student transition between the two levels and eliminate duplication of student effort.
- Increase emphasis on occupational education programs which include cooperative work experience and work-study opportunities.
- Continue to diversify opportunities through program design which permits greater individualization of instruction and fuller utilization of educational resources; e.g., modular scheduling and year-round instruction.
- Encourage occupational education students to use their skills in activities which foster leadership abilities and serve the com-

munity. This objective implies increased emphasis on the occupational education youth organizations.

- Increase the number of students who begin and successfully complete post-secondary occupational education programs. Workshops and seminars will be conducted for 2-year college students, teachers, administrators, and counselors, to develop skills and techniques in achievement motivation and humanistic education.
- Strengthen guidance, placement, and followup services for students in occupational education programs at all instructional levels. Every student will have access to occupational information systems, and will leave school with knowledge of the occupations most appropriate to his needs, interests, and abilities. Every student will be assisted in making the transition from school to work and/or further education. The educational system will have continued responsibility for the student's occupational success after he leaves school, or each time he leaves school.
- Strengthen the preparation of occupational education teachers at all instructional levels through improved preservice teacher education programs and increased participation of occupational education teachers in inservice programs.
- Continuously reexamine and strengthen the relationship between occupational education programs and current and anticipated employment opportunities.
- Continue the regional planning activity in all regions of the State, encouraging involvement and cooperation by all agencies and groups which have a concern for occupational education.
- Conduct research, evaluation, exemplary, and innovative activities designed to enhance the quality of the State's total occupational education program. Currently being developed are: improved instruments for collection of enrollment and followup data; guidelines for local and regional evaluation of occupational education programs; a design for cost control of occupational programs; and a demonstration planning model for use in developing comprehensive occupational education programs within the structure of total educational redesign.
- Assist in diminishing the barriers to employment which may be encountered by various segments of society, including racial minority groups, the handicapped, the aged, and women. Occupational education followup studies will be examined for evidence of such barriers, and utilized to recommend, initiate, and support changes that will help to eliminate job discrimination.
- Promote greater understanding of occupational education among parents, students, educators, and the community. Information will be developed and disseminated concerning the availability and value of occupational education programs, and all of these groups will be more actively involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of occupational programs.

CONCLUSION

The major concepts in the Regents policy concerning occupational education are:

- that New York State needs to develop a comprehensive system of occupational education serving all persons in need of occupational preparation through utilization of all available resources, public and private, which offer such preparation;
- that a comprehensive occupational education system will make available to every person a continuum of educational opportunities beginning in early childhood and extending beyond high school for as long as that person needs or desires such opportunities;
- that occupational orientation in the elementary, middle, and early secondary years will provide all students with the basis for informed decisions regarding their occupational and educational plans for the immediate future;
- that occupational education services for adults and out-of-school youth will be expanded and improved through more orderly arrangements which eliminate wasteful competition and duplication of efforts;
- that all occupational education programs will be conducted within the framework of a State and regional planning process, coordinated by the State as part of its overall responsibility for education, and involving all levels of government and all agencies or groups which operate or are affected by occupational programs.